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The New Year is Here

January 23, 2008

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Ring out the old, ring in the new, Ring, happy bells, across
the snow: The year is going, let him go; Ring out the false,
ring in the true. ~Alfred Lord Tennyson, 1850

Just What the DR Ordered



Beth prescribed a vacation for our family in the Dominican Republic just before the New Year. It was not only relaxing, as we sunned and splashed our days away, but also heartfelt, as it was the first time we have seen our much-missed daughter, Emily, since she went away to college at Macalester College in Minnesota this fall.

We all somehow found time to catch up on our reading, as well. From my standpoint, I can now highly-recommend "Fast Food Nation" and Caroline Kennedy's book, "Profiles in Courage for Our Time."

I came back to help welcome our newest Council Member, Joan Gronowski, to City Hall and to help facilitate the annual reorganization of the City Council.

All positions were appointed by a majority vote of the entire

City Council for a two-year period. Here's the new lineup:

Sandy Annabi was named the new Majority Leader. She is also now Chair of the Legislation and Codes Committee and will continue to serve as Chair of the Education Committee.

Liam McLaughlin remains the Minority Leader. He is now Co-Chair of the Budget and Finance Committee and Chair of the Franchises and the new Environmental Policy and Protection Committees.

Pat McDow is now Co-Chair of the Budget and Finance Committee as well as the Real Estate and Economic Development Committee. She remains Chair of Community Services.

Joan Gronowski is now Co-Chair of Municipal Operations along with Dee Barbato.

The Journal News and the Home News & Times each respectively won 7-0 approval as the City's official daily and weekly newspapers.

And I am now the Chair of Intergovernmental Relations and will continue to Co-Chair the Real Estate and Economic Development Committee.

Important Meeting Tonight!



A public hearing will be held **tonight, Wednesday, Jan. 23** at 6:30 p.m. at City Hall regarding the Alexander Street redevelopment proposal.

You may sign up to speak by calling the City Clerk by 3 p.m. today at (914) 377-6020.

Let me remind readers that this is a once-in-a-century opportunity to establish a new character for the waterfront and that your opinion matters. So please, let your voice be heard at tonight's meeting (the last one

being held) or by submitting comments **BY FEBRUARY 20** to the City of Yonkers Planning and Development Department, Attn: Daisy Colon, 87 Nepperhan Ave., Yonkers, NY 10701 tel: 914-377-6650.

The new plan, unveiled by the city last month, calls for a 112-acre development comprised of 3,750 apartments in 18 residential towers ranging in height from 12 to 30 stories and 13 acres of new parkland in an old industrial area bounded by the Hudson River and the Metro-North railroad tracks up to and including parts of Warburton Ave.

For more information on the development, click [here](#).

Transparency in Government



The Council recently approved another of my initiatives to make our government more open and transparent to constituents.

To this end, all City Council agendas and annotated agendas (minutes) are now being posted on the [City Website](#). This will further ensure open and ethical business practice.

Also, please note that my official City of Yonkers email address has changed from Chuck.Lesnick@cityofyonkers.com to Chuck.Lesnick@YonkersNY.gov. For now, both addresses work but at some point the old one will go into Never-Never-Land. Please change your records.

You can also visit my new, updated [City of Yonkers Webpage](#) to learn more of what's happening and read a variety of news clips organized by subject, as well as newsletters, eblasts, and more. The City's new website address is www.yonkersNY.gov

Parkland Swap

The Council last night voted unanimously to swap three acres of unusable parkland underneath 87 Nepperhan Avenue and the Municipal Parking Garage for more than twice the amount of replacement parkland to help facilitate the Downtown development.



The vote de-dedicated less than three acres of basically paved-over land in our Downtown that had been categorized as 'parkland' and dedicated 8.25 acres of open 'replacement parkland' in its place as part of the Yonkers Parks System.

These parcels -- a 4.95 acre lot and a 3.30 acre lot -- will become the "replacement parcels" necessary to help facilitate the redevelopment of downtown Yonkers.

When this action is completed and the new acreage is officially added to Yonkers' park inventory, another significant step in furthering the Urban Green Space Initiative will have been accomplished.

The parkland is just south of the Foxfire School/Tara Circle property located at the intersection of Odell Ave. and N. Broadway in northwest Yonkers.

Leaf Blower Ban



At last night's City Council meeting, members voted unanimously to approve a ban on using gas-powered leaf blowers -- for a second time.

Though the Council unanimously approved the June 1 to Sept. 30 ban, the Mayor vetoed the bill in December, after many in the Yonkers lawn-care industry said it had passed without their knowledge. The newly formed Environmental Policy and Protection Committee then held another meeting to hear from everyone before the Council made its decision.

The ban, which was tested last summer, reduces the noise and pollution from leaf blowers, only allowing their use during the "high" seasons when they are needed most.

City departments that use leaf blowers such as Parks, Education, and Public Works are being asked to voluntarily comply with the ban.

Yonkers joins a growing number of Westchester municipalities to enact leaf blower bans including Rye, Greenburgh, Scarsdale, Dobbs Ferry, and Mamaroneck. The county has also created stricter standards that require landscapers to use newer, cleaner machines.

A story on the leaf blower ban ran in last Sunday's [New York Times](#).

Albany Bound



I am heading up to Albany today with the Mayor to lobby for state aid. I am meeting with Senator Andrea Stewart-Cousins and Assemblymembers Mike Spano and Gary Pretlow. This will be the first of several trips and comes on the heels of Governor Spitzer's announcement yesterday of a \$124 billion budget for the 2008-09 fiscal year that would limit increases in education aid, cut health-care spending by nearly \$1 billion and stall planned increases in property-tax rebates to homeowners.

While the budget provides for a 7% increase in State Education Funding, and has advanced another \$5 million in municipal aid, the City of Yonkers is still handcuffed to an education formula that works against us by wrongly including our urban city and school district within a wealthy suburban County. However some of Governor Spitzer's proposals regarding the environment, economic development and transportation have the potential to help Yonkers greatly.

I will keep you posted.

History Bucks

High school seniors with an interest in Yonkers history are invited to apply for the 2007 Patricia Mangold Scholarship Awards. A scholarship of \$1,000 and another worth \$500 will be awarded to students from Yonkers who show an appreciation for the history of the city through essay, photography, video or other medium. Applications are available from the Yonkers Historical Society. Call 914-961-8940.

Written by Laura Fahrenthold.

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